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Missionary Candidates

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WOMEN'S MISSIONARY
ASSOCIATION *of the* BAPTIST
MISSIONARY SOCIETY

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Missionary Candidates

THAT a spirit of devotion and service has been awakened in the young womanhood of our Baptist Churches is evidenced in the remarkable number of offers for missionary work.

The experience of coming into personal contact with bright and earnest young women, eager to give themselves to the service of their Lord overseas, is one of the keenest joys, if also one of the biggest responsibilities of secretarial life at the Mission House. Many of these volunteers are well qualified and suitable, but a considerable number, even of those who come from so-called missionary churches, have very vague ideas with regard to the nature and scope of foreign missionary work, and of the equipment necessary in a foreign missionary.

It has been well said that a need known and the ability to meet that need together constitute a call, but frequently the latter part of the definition is forgotten, and not the least of the many problems which the W.M.A. Secretaries at the Mission House have to tackle, is that of dealing sympathetically, and yet faithfully, with girls who believe they have received a definite call to this service, but have failed to realise that a certain equipment is necessary which they do not possess and are unlikely to obtain.

These lines are written to answer questions that are constantly asked, and in the hope that they may

help would-be candidates, and those who are influencing the young life of our churches, to realise something of the nature of the work abroad, of the kind of girl who is likely to be accepted, and of the reasons which govern the choice of workers.

In what does the Work of the W.M.A. consist?

It is carried on in four fields: India, Ceylon, China, and Africa, and in each sphere reinforcements are greatly needed. The work itself is varied, and includes visitation of women in their homes, school work and normal classes, the training of Bible-women and other native helpers, industrial and village work, itineration, etc. Splendid service can be rendered by women of ordinary attainments, but there is room for the exercise of every bit of talent, and the highest training and culture will find abundant scope in the growingly important educational work.

What are the necessary Qualifications for a Foreign Missionary?

Broadly speaking, they are those which would be looked for in the very best type of Christian worker at home.

The first and most vital qualification is a **personal experience of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and a life fully yielded to His service.** The missionary goes to non-Christian lands as the living representative of her Lord, and many of those with whom she comes in contact will know of Christ only so much as is shown in her life.

Health of body comes next in importance, not only

for the missionary's own sake, but for that of her colleagues, and on the matter of physical fitness medical opinion must decide.

Mental fitness is another indispensable qualification, and this implies not only the foundation of a good education, but also the power to think clearly and to grasp new ideas. Every missionary must, through many hours of daily study, master the language, however difficult, of the people to whom she goes, and in this matter girls who have left school at an early age and have not formed the habit of study are placed at a great disadvantage. It should nevertheless be recognised that lack of early opportunity need not invariably constitute an insuperable barrier, for this can be overcome by earnest determination and persevering effort, though the girl who is able to do this is the exception and not the rule.

Adaptability, the power to accommodate oneself to circumstances and to live happily with colleagues is all important. On the mission field there is often little opportunity for social intercourse outside the group of immediate colleagues, and the cultivation of the spirit of comradeship and loyalty is most essential. Faddy, nervy people are neither desirable as colleagues, nor suited for life in a tropical climate.

Imagination is by no means unimportant, for from it comes the power to sympathise, to put oneself in the place of others and see things from their point of view.

A fund of good **common sense** is invaluable, as is also the experience which may be gained in ordinary home life, of tackling everyday domestic problems, the exercise of what may be termed "Practical Ability"—the power and the will to turn one's hand to anything and everything that needs doing—to get the best out of unpromising conditions, and through all to keep cheerful. This will add greatly to the

comfort and well-being of the missionary herself and of her colleagues, and a **sense of humour** is a very great asset which will help in turning many an awkward corner.

Is special Missionary Training necessary?

Most emphatically. The days of the casual untrained worker are past; and in this highest of all callings, as in every other, it is the trained woman who counts. The fact that the work of the foreigner in the mission field is becoming more and more that of training and superintending native helpers makes adequate preparation the more imperative.

In addition to some practical experience of Christian work, the training should include:

Bible Study. A thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, and a firm grasp of the fundamentals of the Christian faith are essential.

Study of Missionary Methods and the History of Missions. The story of the past and the experience of other missionaries will prove of inestimable value in dealing with present-day problems.

Study of non-Christian Religions, that knowing something of the religious beliefs of the people to whom she goes, she may be able to approach them with sympathetic understanding.

Study of Educational Methods. Seeing that every missionary has to be more or less of a teacher she must know something of modern educational principles.

Study of Business Methods, Psychology, Phonetics, Moral Hygiene, Health in the Tropics, etc.

At what Age should a Candidate send in her Application to the Society?

When about 22 she should apply in writing to the Candidate Secretary of the W.M.A., giving some particulars about her education, present circumstances, church membership, etc. She will then receive a schedule of questions relative to health and general fitness. Along with her replies she will be asked to send testimonials from her pastor and two or three friends, one of whom should be a lady, as to her Christian character and qualifications, and a certificate of health from her own doctor; her physical fitness must also be certified by the Medical Officer of the Society and by their consultant, after which will follow a personal interview with the Candidate Board.

Should her application be favourably considered, she will be expected to undertake training at a missionary college. The course may be from one to three years according to previous equipment, and the cost of college fees, from £50 to £80 per annum, should, if possible, be borne by the candidate herself or by the church of which she is a member, though if circumstances do not permit of this it is sometimes possible for assistance to be given by a scholarship or otherwise.

The best age for going abroad is about 25, and a definite application cannot be considered until the age of 22 or 23, but the Secretaries of the W.M.A. are always glad to get into touch with younger girls, and to advise them with regard to preparation.

The **Home Preparation Union** has been formed to meet the need of those between the ages of 17 and 25 who desire to prepare themselves for missionary service, and are not at present free or eligible for whole time training. It provides a course of systematic study of the Bible by correspondence: the

students pay an annual fee of 3/6 and provide their own text-books, which are inexpensive.

Every offer of service receives full and sympathetic consideration, and no committee approaches its task with a greater consciousness of responsibility and of the need of Divine guidance, than does the Candidate Board, in the work of which joy and sorrow so strangely blend, and while its members rejoice exceedingly with those whom they accept, their keenest sympathy goes out towards those whom they have regretfully to decline.

It is to be anticipated that to many who read these lines will come the gladness of being accepted for foreign service, but to some must come the pain of being refused. In a spirit of loving sympathy in the disappointment,. one would like to suggest to any such that she should not feel herself shut out from a share in the work of foreign missions, but rather look upon the decision of the Board as the voice of God calling her to His service at home, and try to realise that it is perhaps as hard for the Board to decline her offer as for her to be refused. They know, as she does not, the tremendous need for reinforcements, the strain on overburdened workers, the task that is hindered or left undone for lack of adequate help; but they also realise, as she cannot, that to send out a new colleague who is unsuitable by reason of health or otherwise, is not to strengthen but to weaken the staff, and is no kindness to the candidate herself.

There is abundant room in the church at home for missionary enthusiasts, and many women to whom the door of service abroad has been closed are doing magnificent work for foreign missions in this land.

All enquiries and correspondence should be addressed to: The Candidate Secretary, Women's Missionary Association, 19 Furnival Street, London, E.C.4

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